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Bipartisan legislation establishing Bureau of Fire Services signed into law

Bureau will strengthen emergency management and homeland security

LANSING—Optimal firefighting efficiency and increased safety for Michigan citizens became a reality today after Governor Granholm signed a bipartisan package of bills to consolidate firefighting resources into a new Bureau of Fire Services, announced state Sen. Valde Garcia, R-Howell, one of the authors of the plan.

“This legislation, supported by firefighters across the state, not only makes state firefighting agencies and their work more efficient, it makes us all safer. This is a great step forward in preparing for any unfortunate disaster,” said Garcia.

Garcia was the primary co-sponsor of Senate Bill 1133, the main bill in the package. It will establish the Bureau of Fire Services as an autonomous agency within the Department of Labor and Economic Growth (DLEG) and will transfer the powers and duties of the state fire marshal to the newly created office. The office also will include the Michigan Fire Fighters Training Council, Fire Safety Board and any other agency, board or commission designated as a part of the bureau.

The legislation follows an executive directive issued last November to consolidate resources and strengthen Michigan’s emergency management and homeland security efforts. The directive was issued because the fire marshal’s supervisor blocked money from being used for firefighting training and other services. The proposals will place these changes into state law.

The 25-bill package is designed to establish a bureau that will combine all aspects of fire protection that has been fragmented and scattered over the years to various areas of government. Legislators have embraced this package as a crucial issue that will empower first responders and allow appropriate funding.

“The Michigan Legislature is committed to taking all appropriate steps to protect the public and empower our first responders so they can perform to the best of their abilities,” said Garcia.

The package consists of Senate Bills 1133-1145 and House Bills 5860-5871. The bills:

- Establish the Bureau of Fire Services within DLEG;
- Transfer the duties of the state fire marshal to the new bureau;
- Require the state fire marshal, with the approval of the Michigan Fire Fighters Training Council, to prepare any examinations and standards related to firefighter training;
- Transfer the State Fire Safety Board and Michigan Fire Fighters Training Council to the Bureau of Fire Services;
- Make the state fire marshal a member of the Michigan Fire Fighters Training Council; and
- Recognize the act creating the Arson Strike Force Unit.

A photo of Sen. Garcia and Governor Granholm at the bill signing is available at:

<http://www.senate.michigan.gov/gop/photowire/Garcia/Garcia.htm>

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